

## The Bill of Rights – Amendment 1

On September 17, 1787, the Constitutional Convention approved the Constitution of the United States. In 1791, ten amendments were added to the Constitution. These ten amendments are called **The Bill of Rights**. The amendments were added because it was felt that the Constitution did not list the rights that should be protected for all Americans.

The First Amendment to our Constitution protects our freedom of expression. This is what the First Amendment says about freedom of expression:

*Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for redress of grievances.*

To state it in modern language, under the First Amendment we are guaranteed **freedom of speech** (the right to speak without fear of punishment), **freedom of the press** (the right of newspapers to print whatever they feel is newsworthy), **freedom of assembly** (the right to gather together in a group), and the **right of petition** (the right to ask the government to change things).

It is important to understand that the First Amendment limits the powers of Congress. It prevents Congress from placing unreasonable and unfair limits on freedom of expression. That is why the Amendment begins with the phrase, "Congress shall make no law."